

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A device comprising:  
a body having:  
    a first portion defining a tapered hole configured for guiding a member  
into a tube coupled to the body,  
    a second portion defining a bore for passage of the member therethrough  
from the tapered hole, and  
    a ledge formed on an internal surface of the body at an intersection  
between the tapered hole and the bore, and  
    the body defining a slot communicating with the hole and the bore for  
separating the body and the member while the member remains in the tube.
2. (cancelled)
3. (currently amended) The device of claim 1[[2]] wherein the bore has a constant diameter.
4. (currently amended) The device of claim 1[[2]] wherein the bore is tapered.
5. (cancelled)
6. (currently amended) The device of claim 1[[2]] wherein the slot extends from the tapered hole and the bore to an external surface of the body.
7. (currently amended) The device of claim 1 further comprising the member and wherein the member comprises a suture thread.

8. (original) The device of claim 1 further comprising a handle extending from the body.

9. (currently amended) A device comprising:

a tube; and

a body having:

a first portion defining a tapered hole configured for guiding a member into the tube coupled to the body, and

a second portion defining a bore for passage of the member therethrough from the tapered hole, and

a ledge formed on an internal surface of the body at an intersection between the tapered hole and the bore,

the body defining a slot communicating with the hole and the bore for separating the body and the member while the member remains in the tube.

10. (original) The device of claim 9 wherein the body is configured for connection to an end of the tube.

11. (cancelled)

12. (currently amended) The device of claim 9[[11]] wherein the bore has a constant diameter.

13. (currently amended) The device of claim 9[[11]] wherein the bore is tapered.

14. (cancelled)

15. (currently amended) The device of claim 9[[11]] wherein the slot extends from the tapered hole and the bore to an external surface of the body.

16. (original) The device of claim 9 wherein the tube defines an opening for receiving the member.

17. (currently amended) The device of claim 16 wherein a width of the opening is substantially the same as the width of the narrowest portion of the tapered hole.

18. (currently amended) The device of claim 9 further comprising the member and wherein the member comprises a suture thread.

19. (original) The device of claim 9 further comprising a handle extending from the body.

20. (original) A method comprising:  
coupling a body to an end of a tube, the body defining a tapered hole and a slot;  
guiding a member into the tube through the tapered hole; and  
separating the body and the member by passing the member through the slot.

21. (original) The method of claim 20 wherein coupling comprises receiving the end of the tube in a bore in the body, the bore communicating with the tapered hole.

22. (currently amended) A device comprising:  
guide means ~~defining a tapered hole configured for guiding a member into a tube coupled to the guide means;~~  
receiving means for receiving the tube;  
a ledge for restricting the tube from passing from the receiving means into the guide means; and  
separating the guide means including means for completely separating the member from the device~~guide means and the member~~ while the member remains in the tube.

23. (currently amended) The device of claim 1, wherein ~~the body includes a first terminal end and includes a second terminal end portion, the first terminal end defining an opening and the second terminal end portion defining the tapered hole, and wherein the slot extends from a the first terminal end of the first portion to a the second terminal end of the second portion.~~

24. (previously presented) The device of claim 1, wherein the body is configured such that the tapered hole guides the member when advanced into the tube from a larger opening of the tapered hole to a smaller opening of the tapered hole.

25. (currently amended) The device of claim 9, wherein ~~the body includes a first terminal end and includes a second terminal end portion, the first terminal end defining an opening and the second terminal end portion defining the tapered hole, and wherein~~ the slot extends from a the first terminal end of the first portion to a the second terminal end of the second portion.

26. (previously presented) The device of claim 9, wherein the body is configured such that the tapered hole guides the member when advanced into the tube from a larger opening of the tapered hole to a smaller opening of the tapered hole.

27. (previously presented) The method of claim 20, wherein separating the body and the member by passing the member through the slot comprises separating the body and the member by passing the member through the slot while the member remains in the tube.

28. (previously presented) The method of claim 20, further comprising decoupling the body from the end of the tube.

29. (currently amended) A device comprising:  
a body having:  
    a first terminal end portion defining a tapered hole, and having  
    a second terminal end portion opposite to the first terminal end portion,  
~~the first terminal end defining an opening and the second terminal end portion defining a~~  
bore in communication with the tapered hole,  
    a ledge formed on an internal surface of the body at an intersection between the  
bore and the tapered hole,~~a tapered hole for guiding a member into a tube, and~~

the body defining a slot extending from the tapered hole and the bore to an external surface of the body and extending from the first terminal end portion to the second terminal end portion that communicates with the hole for separating the body and the member; and  
a cylindrical handle connected to the body at a location opposite to the slot.

30. (new) A device comprising:

a body having:

a first portion defining a tapered hole configured for guiding a member into a tube coupled to the body,

a second portion defining a bore for passage of the member therethrough from the tapered hole, the bore having a diameter that is greater than a width of the narrowest portion of the tapered hole, and

a ledge formed at an intersection between the first portion and the second portion,

the body defining a slot communicating with the hole and the bore for separating the body and the member while the member remains in the tube.